

From: (b)(6); (b)(7)(C)
Sent: 13 Mar 2018 22:23:24 +0000
To: VAExecSec
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Case ID#PR-021660 - Rep. Tim Ryan letter dated Feb 23 18
Attachments: PR-021660 - Rep. Tim Ryan - Feb 23 18 - Veterans Affairs improvements.pdf

THE WHITE HOUSE
OFFICE OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT
DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT AND TRACKING UNIT
Please see attached letter addressed to the President from Congressional Member(s).

To: Department of Veterans Affairs
Action Requested: Appropriate Action

Please send a copy of response or draft response for signature (if one is requested) to the Document Management and Tracking Unit mailbox (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) @WHO.EOP.GOV. include any additional comments and/or actions taken by your agency. If more information is needed call (202) 456 (b)(6); (b)(7)(C)



1126 LONGWORTH BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
202-225-5261
202-225-3719 FAX

TIM RYAN
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
13TH DISTRICT, OHIO

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
LEGISLATIVE BRANCH SUBCOMMITTEE
RANKING MEMBER
DEFENSE SUBCOMMITTEE
MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS,
AND RELATED AGENCIES SUBCOMMITTEE

February 23, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) continues its transformation and modernization efforts, I would like to offer support for the improvements that have been made to the organization over the last year. The veterans of our country deserve the best possible care that is available.

The progress that has been made within the VA is encouraging. However, the allegations against Secretary David Shulkin are concerning and a secondary review of the IG report is appropriate and necessary. While I do not condone what has been alleged, I encourage you to allow Secretary Shulkin to continue his work unimpeded while the investigation continues.

Under Secretary Shulkin's leadership, several veterans' service organizations have reported that the modernization of the appeals process for VA benefits, decreased wait times, and increased access to mental health care have improved patient satisfaction. The initiatives to eliminate veteran suicide through early engagement of at-risk individuals and to enable veterans to manage their own health experience holistically on a secure, streamlined and interoperable platform are steps in the right direction. I encourage the VA to consider a more holistic approach for every veteran.

I urge you to continue to improve the accountability, whistleblower protection, transparency, customer service for veterans, suicide prevention, and mental health care services within the department. Although much progress has been made, streamlining VA services and improving the veteran experience must remain a top priority for the department. Modernizing the agency will be difficult but not unattainable.

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2 of 18



While you consider making other positive changes to the department, the core values of the VA—Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence—must continue to define the Department’s culture. I cannot overstate how important it is for our nation to provide first-rate care to those who have defended our freedom. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Tim Ryan
Member of Congress

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3517

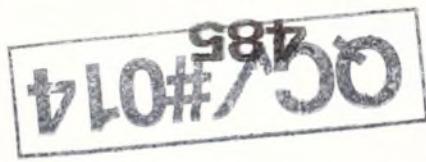
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AND MAILED AT TAXPAYER EXPENSE

Tim Ryan
M.C.

MAR 01 2018



From: US Department of Veterans Affairs
Sent: 19 Jan 2018 14:29:21 -0600
To: VAAllUsers
Subject: VA Stories of Note: January 13 – January 19, 2018

AMESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

VA Stories of Note: January 13 – January 19, 2018

FOX News (Video), Jan. 18: [Secretary Shulkin on why top positions remain vacant at VA](#)

In this nearly four-minute video Secretary Shulkin discusses his priorities for the Department moving forward, including filling senior-level vacancies at VA. He also addressed the scalpel lawsuit storyline and the approaching budget deadline. Video description: On 'America's Newsroom,' the secretary of Veterans Affairs speaks out on the hurdles facing efforts to reform the department.

Fed News Radio - WFED (AM-1500), Jan. 18: [Shulkin: 'VA still far short of bold, transformation change we need'](#) Vacancies —at least 35,000 health care professionals and four key leadership positions — are holding the Veterans Affairs Department back from true progress. That's the message VA Secretary David Shulkin took to Congress Wednesday, as he detailed the status of several major initiatives that the department's attempting to move on at breakneck speed.

USA Today (Video), Jan. 17: [Exclusive: Inside Trump's new VA office, early moves to help whistleblowers draw praise](#) Dan Martin is chief engineer for Veterans Affairs hospitals in northern Indiana, but he hasn't done much engineering for almost a year — or much of anything for that matter. After he reported concerns about possible contracting improprieties at the hospitals, managers stripped him of his duties last March, alleging he had been mean and used inappropriate language with his employees.

The Laura Ingraham Show (Audio), Jan. 17: [Wednesday, January, 2018 - Guest host: John Hinderaker; Guests: Jenna Ellis, Congressman Paul Gosar, Secretary David Shulkin](#) On the Laura Ingraham show this morning, one of my guests was Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin. We talked about the considerable progress that has been made on veterans' affairs in one short year under President Trump. At LifeZette, Brendan Kirby recaps the interview and makes a very important point: the VA can actually fire non-performing employees!

Fed News Radio - WFED (AM-1500), Jan.17: [How VA is beginning the 10-year push to adopt a new electronic health record](#) The Veterans Affairs Department has a new motto in 2018. Health care and IT professionals in the department are looking at their "18 for '18" — 18 collaborative projects and priorities that both the Veterans Health Administration and VA Office of Information and Technology (VAOT) are looking toward for this year.

Orlando Sentinel (Orlando, Fla.), Jan. 16: [VA makes opioid prescribing rates public for first time](#) The opioid prescription rates at the VA medical centers in Florida dropped by at least 25 percent between 2012 and 2017, according to a new interactive map posted online by the Department of Veterans Affairs. VA for the first time made the information public this month as part of its “efforts to be the most transparent agency in government,” according to its website.

WLUC (NBC-6) (Negaunee, Mich.), Jan. 17: [VA hospitals set to start offering same day orthotic, prosthetic services](#) The change is focused on veterans who need new prosthetic limbs, replacement parts, or custom orthotics. More complicated issues can be assessed and scheduled the same day for walk-ins. “With this new process, really what we’re trying to do is save the time. Save not only the time on the primary care provider side, because everybody’s busy, but more than anything, serve the veterans better by not having to wait extra days to get the service that you need,” said Josh Early, Chief of Physical Therapy.

The Post and Courier (Charleston, S.C.), Jan. 13: [South Carolina VAs seek to shake negative reputation, pointing to high ratings and innovation](#) The leader of Charleston's Veterans Affairs medical center says he doesn't like to talk about ratings. But if Scott Isaacks had to, he would say the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center earned its third-straight five-star rating last year. The hospital is the only one to achieve a five-star rating in the South in 2017. It is ranked second among all 40 large medical centers of its kind, behind Boston's VA medical center.

Salisbury Post (Salisbury, N.C.), Jan. 13: [Employee gives coat to veteran in need](#) With a low of 23 degrees, the week before Christmas was unseasonably cool for North Carolina. Despite these temperatures, the Salisbury Veterans Affairs hospital continued throughout the week with business as usual. One employee went beyond the call of duty.

FedNews Radio WFED (AM-1500, Audio), Jan. 12: [Veterans Affairs publishes how many opioids it's prescribing online](#) The Veterans Affairs said it was reducing the use of opioid medicines, and published data to prove it. VA [...] posted online the rates of opioid prescriptions for each of its medical centers. Charts show changes in prescription rates over five years through 2017.

El Paso Times (Video) (El Paso, Texas), Jan. 12: [El Paso VA leads nation on reducing opioid prescribing rate](#) The El Paso Veterans Affairs Health Care System cut opioid prescribing rates by 66 percent since 2012, the most improved rate in the United States, officials said Thursday. The VA lowered its opioid dispensing rate at its pharmacy from 19 percent in 2012 to 7 percent in 2017, according to data posted by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Nationwide, the rate dropped by 41 percent from 2012 to 2017.

From: VAExecSec
Sent: 6 Oct 2016 16:06:32 +0000
To: (b)(6)
Subject: FW: Rep. Matt Salmon letter dated September 30, 2016 - ID#1211200
Attachments: 1211200.pdf

From: (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) [mailto:(b)(6); (b)(7)(C)]@who.eop.gov]
Sent: Thursday, October 06, 2016 12:01 PM
To: VAExecSec
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Rep. Matt Salmon letter dated September 30, 2016 - ID#1211200

**THE WHITE HOUSE OFFICE
REFERRAL**

October 05, 2016

TO: DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

ACTION COMMENTS:

ACTION REQUESTED: DIRECT REPLY W/COPY

REFERRAL COMMENTS:

DESCRIPTION OF INCOMING:

ID: 1211200

MEDIA: EMAIL

DOCUMENT DATE: September 30, 2016

TO: PRESIDENT OBAMA

FROM: THE HONORABLE MATT SALMON
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

SUBJECT: EXPRESSES COMMENT ON THE APPOINTMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS OF RIMA ANN NELSON AS THE DIRECTOR THE PHOENIX
VA MEDICAL CENTER

COMMENTS: _____

PROMPT ACTION IS ESSENTIAL -- IF REQUIRED ACTION HAS NOT BEEN TAKEN WITHIN 9 WORKING DAYS OF RECEIPT,
UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED, PLEASE TELEPHONE THE UNDERSIGNED AT (202) 456 (b)(6); (b)(7)(C)

RETURN ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE, WORKSHEET AND COPY OF RESPONSE (OR DRAFT) TO: DOCUMENT TRACKING UNIT,
(b)(6); OFFICE OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT - THE WHITE HOUSE, 20500

**THE WHITE HOUSE
DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT AND
TRACKING WORKSHEET**



DATE RECEIVED: October 04, 2016

CASE ID: 1211200

NAME OF CORRESPONDENT: THE HONORABLE MATT SALMON

SUBJECT: EXPRESSES COMMENT ON THE APPOINTMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OF RIMA ANN NELSON AS THE DIRECTOR THE PHOENIX VA MEDICAL CENTER

ROUTE TO: AGENCY/OFFICE	(STAFF NAME)	CODE	ACTION	DISPOSITION		DATE COMPLETED
				TYPE RESPONSE	CODE	
LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS	(b)(6)	ORG		10/05/2016		

ACTION COMMENTS:

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS R 10/05/2016

ACTION COMMENTS:

ACTION COMMENTS:

ACTION COMMENTS:

COMMENTS: 3 ADDITIONAL SIGHNEES

MEDIA TYPE: EMAIL

USER CODE:

ACTION CODES	DISPOSITION		
	TYPE RESPONSE	DISPOSITION CODES	COMPLETED DATE
A = APPROPRIATE ACTION B = RESEARCH AND REPORT BACK D = DRAFT RESPONSE I = INFO COPY/NO ACT NECESSARY R = DIRECT REPLY W/ COPY ORG = ORIGINATING OFFICE	INITIALS OF SIGNER (W.H. STAFF) NRN = NO RESPONSE NEEDED OTBE = OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS	A = ANSWERED OR ACKNOWLEDGED C = CLOSED X = INTERIM REPLY	DATE OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OR CLOSEOUT DATE (MM/DD/YY)

KEEP THIS WORKSHEET ATTACHED TO THE ORIGINAL INCOMING LETTER AT ALL TIMES

REFER QUESTIONS TO DOCUMENT TRACKING UNIT (202)45(b)(6);

SEND ROUTING UPDATES AND COMPLETED RECORDS TO OFFICE OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT - DOCUMENT TRACKING UNIT

(b)(6); EEOB.

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 30, 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

It has recently come to our attention that Ms. RimaAnn Nelson, current director of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Manila, Philippines, has been named as the new director of the Phoenix VA Medical Center.

This week, various media outlets reported that the Department of Veterans Affairs made the appointment, despite Ms. Nelson's questionable record. According to the VA, Ms. Nelson served as the Acting Director of the John Cochran VA Medical Center (VAMC) in St. Louis, Missouri when a whistleblower exposed the unsanitary treatment of reusable dental equipment that potentially infected over 1,800 veterans with HIV, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C.

The VA Office of Inspector General Office of Healthcare Inspections conducted an investigation of the Cochran VAMC at the time, and reported that its staff had never been trained to sterilize reusable equipment. Furthermore, Cochran VAMC leadership did not "assure that corrective actions were consistently implemented in response to [Veterans Health Administration] guidance and the Infectious Disease Program Office (IDPO) report" (VAOIG-10-03346-112).

Under Ms. Nelson's tenure, the hospital closed twice for unsafe and unsanitary conditions and was ranked last in the country for patient satisfaction out of 126 VA medical centers.

A few short weeks ago, on September 1, 2016, Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Sloan Gibson met with the Arizona delegation at the Phoenix VA Medical Center. He assured us in no uncertain terms that finding the best possible candidate to replace Ms. Deborah Amdur as permanent director of the Phoenix VA was his highest priority. To think that Ms. Nelson, with her less-than-impressive past, is the best possible candidate to provide crucial leadership for the facility equated to "ground zero" of the VA scandal is unequivocally offensive to us and each of the veterans we represent. Additionally, if this is what a "high priority" looks like to the VA, there is absolutely no doubt why such problems exist in the system.

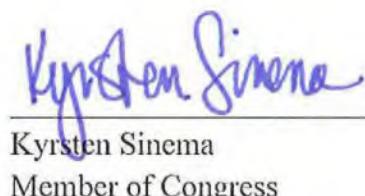
To say that the Department of Veterans Affairs has had a rough past couple of years would be an understatement. We know that you are intimately familiar with the failings of the VA healthcare system, particularly in Arizona. We therefore appeal to you with the strongest sentiment to delay this appointment until the events and Ms. Nelson's actions in St. Louis can be fully explained to and evaluated by the veterans' community in Arizona. We ask you to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to delay Ms. Nelson's appointment to ensure that the new Phoenix VA director's tenure begins on sound footing based on confidence and trust. It is imperative that the VA use the utmost scrutiny in appointing a supremely qualified director to the Phoenix VA. Our veterans have suffered enough. Correcting the substantial issues at the Phoenix VA Medical Center must be a national priority.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,



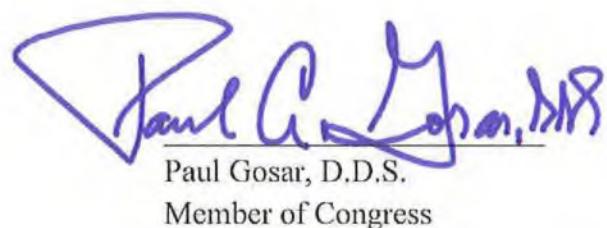
Matt Salmon
Member of Congress



Kyrsten Sinema
Member of Congress



Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress



Paul Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress

From: VAExecSec
Sent: 15 Mar 2018 14:13:05 +0000
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Case ID#PR-021660 - Rep. Tim Ryan letter dated Feb 23 18
Attachments: PR-021660 - Rep. Tim Ryan - Feb 23 18 - Veterans Affairs improvements.pdf

From: [REDACTED] [mailto:[REDACTED]@who.eop.gov]

Sent: Tuesday, March 13, 2018 6:23 PM

To: VAExecSec

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Case ID#PR-021660 - Rep. Tim Ryan letter dated Feb 23 18

THE WHITE HOUSE

OFFICE OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT AND TRACKING UNIT

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To: Department of Veterans Affairs

Action Requested: Appropriate Action

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[REDACTED] @WHO.EOP.GOV. include any additional comments and/or

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[REDACTED]



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TIM RYAN
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
13TH DISTRICT, OHIO

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February 23, 2018

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I urge you to continue to improve the accountability, whistleblower protection, transparency, customer service for veterans, suicide prevention, and mental health care services within the department. Although much progress has been made, streamlining VA services and improving the veteran experience must remain a top priority for the department. Modernizing the agency will be difficult but not unattainable.

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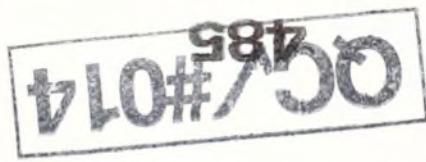
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THIS MAILING WAS PREPARED, PUBLISHED,
AND MAILED AT TAXPAYER EXPENSE

Tim Ryan
M.C.

MAR 01 2018



From: US Department of Veterans Affairs
Sent: 26 Sep 2018 12:00:39 -0700
To: VAAllUsers
Subject: Secretary Wilkie - All-Employee Message on the State of VA.

A MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Secretary Wilkie - All-Employee Message on the State of VA
September 26, 2018

View this message on video at this link

Full Text of Video:

Hello. I recently testified before Congress about our vision for Veterans. I wanted to take a few minutes to share that vision with you, about the state of our VA.

The turmoil of the first half of 2018 is now in the rearview mirror. And I'm happy to report, the state of our VA is better. It's better because of the support of the President, Congress, and an unprecedented series of legislative actions to reform VA and improve care and benefits for Veterans.

And it's better because of you, good people dedicated to caring for Veterans, their families, their caregivers, and their survivors.

It's been my privilege to meet and hear from many of you at national cemeteries, claims processing centers, and VA hospitals from Boston to Las Vegas. You're tackling tough issues, implementing Appeals Modernization as you reduce wait times for Veterans with pending appeals, implementing the MISSION Act to give Veterans more choice in healthcare decisions, adopting the same electronic health record as DoD to give Veterans a seamless transfer of medical information once they leave the service, and improving transparency, increasing accountability, and protecting whistleblowers.

You're on the cutting edge of medical care in rehabilitative services. You're out-performing the private sector in terms of quality of care and patient safety. You've been working around the clock to serve and protect our Veterans across the Carolinas during this time of great need, providing foundational emergency response for our government. As a Carolinian, I thank you on behalf of my family and friends.

I've seen wonderful examples of your accomplishments that deserve so much more attention than they get. And I cannot begin to tell you how proud I am to be part of your team.

And Veterans and their needs are changing, faster than we realize. For the first time in four decades, half of our twenty million Veterans are now under the age of 65. They're computer savvy and demand 21st-century service that's easy to access, efficiently delivered, and available where needed. Ten percent are women. By 2040, about 16 percent will be women. Since 2000, the number of women Veterans receiving VA healthcare has tripled.

All of which is to say, we're on the cusp of the most important era in the history of the Department, transformation not seen since World War II when General Omar Bradley headed the Veterans Administration.

It's not business as usual. Veterans' futures are in our hands. There are no more excuses.

So our first priority is customer service. That's the prime directive. When Veterans come to VA, it is not up to them to get us to say yes. It's up to us, you and me, to get Veterans to yes. That's customer service. We're going to make sure you're trained and equipped to achieve that.

Our second priority, implementing the MISSION Act, will fundamentally transform VA healthcare. It will consolidate community care into a single program that's easier for Veterans, families, community providers, and all of you to navigate. The MISSION Act also expands our family caregivers program to provide much-needed assistance to the people caring for some of our most needy Veterans day in and day out.

Our third priority is replacing our aging electronic health record. The new electronic health record will modernize our appointment system, automate our disability and payment claims systems, and connect VA to the Department of Defense, private healthcare providers, and private pharmacies. Implementing the electronic health record will be an ongoing, iterative process to build a continuum of care that's organized around Veterans' needs.

Our fourth priority is transforming our business systems. We're modernizing human resource management, finance and acquisition, and our supply chain. It's about giving you more leeway to manage budgets, recruit, retain, and relocate staff you need to serve Veterans. It's also about more robust partnerships with state and local communities to address challenges like Veteran homelessness and suicide prevention.

And we'll keep making progress on other important issues like expanding services and sites of care for women Veterans so every Veteran across the country can choose to get her primary care at VA, filling our ranks in all areas, and providing more healthcare appointments than ever before.

Customer service.

The MISSION Act.

Electronic Health Record modernization.

Business Transformation.

Our VA is giving Veterans better access to care and benefits—a VA Veterans choose because we offer world-class customer service across our operations.

Veterans' future is in our hands, and you've shown time and again it's well-placed.

Thank you, and God bless all of you and your families. And God bless America's Veterans.

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ACCESS EMAIL**